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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9611
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0932
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5232
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2811
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1113
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2037
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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2872
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 001410

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP
NSC FOR E.PHU

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TAGS: PREL PGOV ID CB TH

SUBJECT: PREAH VIHEAR -- GOI PROPOSES CONTACT GROUP TO
RESOLVE DISPUTE OVER TEMPLE

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia has proposed the creation of an Indonesian-led ASEAN Contact Group to resolve the dispute between Cambodia and Thailand over the Preah Vihear temple. Indonesian officials are not certain exactly how the Contact Group will function nor whether other ASEAN members will support it. GOI officials acknowledged that neither Cambodia nor Thailand had accepted the contact group proposal. END SUMMARY.

INDONESIA PROPOSES CONTACT GROUP

¶2. (C) The GOI wants ASEAN to assist in resolving the Preah Vihear dispute. During a July 22 meeting with Ade Sukendar, Deputy Director for Asian and Pacific Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU), poloff raised press reports to the effect that FM Wirajuda had proposed that Indonesia lead an ASEAN effort to defuse tensions between Cambodia and Thailand over the disputed Preah Vihear temple. (Note: The Indonesian media reported that FM Wirajuda called for the creation of a "Contact Group" of ASEAN members not directly involved in the dispute. The group, which Indonesia planned to chair, would try to broker a resolution of the dispute.)

¶3. (C) Sukendar replied that Indonesia believed that ASEAN had to take an active role in getting Cambodia and Thailand to resolve the issue before tensions escalated further. GOI officials acknowledged that neither Cambodia nor Thailand had accepted the Contact Group proposal but Sukendar indicated that Indonesia would continue efforts to build support for the initiative within ASEAN.

¶4. (C) Sukendar also said Indonesia opposed Cambodia's efforts to get the UNSC to take up the matter. Indonesia believed that ASEAN has primary responsibility for resolving the issue and that the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation provided the framework for resolving disputes between member-states.

DETAILS, PROSPECTS SKETCHY

¶5. (C) Indonesian officials have yet to work out details of

the proposed contact group, according to Sukendar. He told poloff that the Indonesian proposal remained under discussion among ASEAN officials currently meeting in Singapore. Indonesia would continue to press the idea on its ASEAN peers, but Sukendar acknowledged that no other ASEAN member has fully endorsed the plan.

¶6. (C) Sukendar said Indonesia had floated the proposal because Cambodian-Thai negotiations have so far failed to defuse the situation. Indonesia and other ASEAN members worried that the dispute could lead to violence if left unresolved, he added.

A TEST FOR ASEAN, INDONESIA

¶7. (C) The dispute comes at a critical time for the ASEAN Charter, which the GOI is about to submit to the legislature (DPR) for approval. (Note: Mission will report more fully on the Charter's prospects in Indonesia via septel.) Indonesian academics and media commentators have questioned whether ASEAN can pursue greater integration if it cannot solve a dispute between its own members. An editorial in the July 22 English language Jakarta Post urged Thailand to voluntarily relinquish the ASEAN chair, which it is scheduled to take up on July 28, unless the dispute is resolved by that time. Commentators also called on Indonesia to lead ASEAN's efforts on the issue.

HUME